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COMIC SHOP NEWS™

ARCHER & ARMSTRONG #0

Valiant Zeroes in on History

Valiant Comics may be just over a year old, but the heroes and villains of the Valiant Universe go further back—in some cases, *much* further back. Readers get a chance to learn a little more about that history in May with the release of two Valiant zero issues: ***Archer & Armstrong #0*** and ***Shadowman #0.***

Archer & Armstrong #0 takes readers way back to the Sumerian era for truly epic tale. Will we learn that there are Valiant links to the mythic figures of Gilgamesh and Enkidu? "Oh, yes. And, in fact, you've already met them," writer *Fred Van Lente* said.

With Armstrong and his brothers being immortal, this could the first of many historical/epic appearances. Does Van Lente have others in mind if this one is well received? "The flashbacks are more Eternal Warrior's schtick, as we've seen in the current storyline of ***Archer & Armstrong*** that features him," Van Lente said. "We've seen Gilad as a Chinese Warring States soldier, a Roman Tribune, a pirate-hunting sea captain, a Bedouin warrior in ancient Persia, a John Steed-style MI6 agent during the Cold War.

"And since one of the other brothers is a Timewalker, we might see Archer and Armstrong venturing into the past in person!..."

What roles do the three brothers play in this story? "The king of Ur in ancient Mesopotamia, where the Anni-Padda are from, has discovered the entrance to what in Sumerian mythology was known as 'The Garden of the Sun,'"where the secret to eternal life lies," Van Lente explained. "He sends his three greatest warriors to bring back this Boon, and adventure, sibling rivalry and tragedy result.

"These are the greatest warriors Ur ever saw. Ivar was the brilliant one, Aram the funny one, and Gilad the fierce one. For the first time we get to see all three interact with each other for a whole comic book—and I hope it's as much fun to read as it was for me as I was writing it!"

The solicitation refers to "the greatest secret of the Valiant Universe" being revealed in ***Archer & Armstrong #0***. While Van Lente was understandably reluctant to share that secret ahead of time, he did offer one clue. "To coin a phrase: time is *not* absolute."

How important is the zero issue to the arc that begins in ***Archer & Armstrong #10***? "*Very* important," Van Lente asserted. "While this is #0, it's *really* #9.5, or Chapter One of the third arc of ***Archer & Armstrong***, which involves Area 51, the Lost Colony of Roanoke, the Boon, and the return of Mary-Maria Archer. So it's the perfect launching off point for the rest of series."

Shadowman #0 also offers a look into the past—but it doesn't go back quite as far as the Sumerian era. "For the first time, we've going to dive into the early days and origins of Master Darque," ***Shadowman*** editor *Jody Leheup* explained, "a story never before told in any Valiant comic book. We're going back to the early days of the Louisiana plantations to tell this story and will see the see the tragedies that distinguished his early life, as well his as initiation into the dark arts alongside his sister Sandria—another fan favorite character from the early days of the Valiant Universe. And, rest assured, the secrets that we learn here will have dire consequences for Jack in the modern day."

How does this story relate to the current Shadowman story arc? "The current ***Shadowman*** arc, which began with issue #5, is entitled 'Darque Reckoning'—and with good reason," Leheup said. . "Here we will see Justin begin to flesh out not only Darque's agenda, but the hierarchy and mythology of the Deadside dimension which he inhabits.

"The zero issue presented us with an opportunity to really dig into Master Darque's origin so we could shine a light—or maybe I should say cast a shadow—on Darque's motivations and give readers a more rounded sense for where he's coming from.

"Master Darque is a fascinating character and hopefully ***Shadowman #0*** will make his subsequent appearances all the more powerful as he really puts the hurt on Shadowman later in the arc."

Will what we learn about Master Darque here be important to Jack's role as Shadowman in the future? Will we come away from this story knowing any important facts that Jack has yet to discover? "Back in ***Shadowman #4,*** Jack had his first face-to-face to encounter with Darque in the Deadside—and to everyone's surprise, including his own, Jack recognized Darque's face. So there is clearly an as-yet unrevealed connection between the Boniface and Darque families.

"As we find out more about Jack over the course of the next year, this will be a moment that looms large for Shadowman as a series. ***Shadowman #0,*** in particular, will be the first step toward reconciling Master Darque's human origins with the history of the Shadowmen in the Valiant Universe."

Archer & Armstrong #0 and ***Shadowman #0*** are the second and third zero issues from Valiant, following three months after the release of ***Harbinger #0.*** Does Valiant have a specific goal for the zero issues—and if so, what is that goal? "Our goal is to tell the best damn story we can," Valiant Chief Creative Officer *Dinesh Shamdasani* said, "and the zero issues allow us to do that without the demands of a monthly publishing schedule and without having to emphasize superhero bombastics.

"Valiant has a strong tradition of releasing zero issues that not only stand alone, but also further inform and potentially change the perspective of the story taking place in the main title for longtime readers. With ***Harbinger #0,*** we wanted to delve into some of the events that shaped Toyo Harada's philosophy but also give readers insights into the hardships that made him who he is today, and in doing so hopefully make it harder to classify him as simply good or simply evil. He is a man born of his experiences and the more you learn about his experiences the more you identify with his choices. Quite a terrifying idea.

"The zero issues also present us with the opportunity to let our writers and artists take the time the story requires. We generally don't schedule the zero issues for release until the vast majority of the art is completed. It's an opportunity for us to put out a book that doesn't have to contend with the demands of monthly publishing. We've been incredibly happy with the results. ***Harbinger #0*** is one of our best received issues; the week it was released we got a very sweet email from a fan who had never read a Valiant comic before telling us how happy he was to see a book of the quality of ***Harbinger #0*** coming from a company that has yet to reach its first anniversary."

What led to the decision to put out two zero issues in May, rather than spreading them out? "The strategy with ***Archer & Armstrong #0*** and ***Shadowman #0*** is simply that it was the right time in each book's evolution to explore the characters' pasts and some of the events that shaped them," Shamdasani said. "***Shadowman #0*** could just have easily continued the title's monthly numbering, but because of the standalone nature of the story, the new artist, and the sheer power of the story we wanted to give it every opportunity to serve as a jumping-on point for new readers."

Many publishers view zero issues simply as standalone stories that introduce the characters, but they seem to serve a larger purpose at Valiant. Are the zero issues intended to serve as both introductions and stepping stones for future story lines? "Absolutely!" Shamdasani said. "With every story we tell, we are building. Both building the Valiant Universe *and* building towards something in the future. The zero issues play an incredibly important role in that process—they not only work as standalone stories that introduce the characters, but they also offer further insights into the larger story, potentially calling in question previous assumptions, and as stepping stones for future story lines. Our hope is that readers look back at the zero issues and say, 'this is where it all started.'"

Can we assume, then, that readers will see zero issues for every Valiant title? "We've discussed a number of additional zero issues, both for titles waiting to receive the zero treatment and those that already have!" Shamdasani said. "We have one zero issue currently in development that is particularly exciting—but we can't say more than that right now. It may just be our best issue yet!"

Major events like "Planet Death," crossover sagas such as ***Harbinger Wars,*** zero issues... so when do we get

Courtesy your friendly neighborhood comics outlet!

Valiant Annuals with extra-length stories? "At the right time," Shamdasani replied. "We are very conscious of taking things slow and steady so that we can make each story the best it can be. We've got a couple of things in the works, but the focus is squarely on telling great stories within the books we are currently putting out."

While each zero issue builds towards something much bigger insofar as that individual title is concerned, there are rumors that Valiant is building towards something *really* big further down the line... and the word ***Unity*** has been whispered... "We are indeed building towards something big," Shamdasani said. "We're incredibly excited by what the guys are cooking up and the response fans have had to the pieces we've revealed so far—but to give away anymore about our future would just spoil the surprise!

"As for ***Unity***... its a story we all love from the past, but it's not *nearly* big enough for what we've got planned!"

Shadowman #0, a $2.99 comic written by *Justin Jordan* and illustrated by *Roberto De La Torre,* is scheduled for May 1st release; the book will be offered with a regular cover by *Dave Johnson,* a pullbox variant cover by *Khari Evans,* and a 1-for-20 incentive cover by *Lewis LaRosa.* ***Archer & Armstrong #0,*** a $2.99 comic written by *Fred Van Lente* and illustrated by *Clayton Henry,* is scheduled for May 8th release; the book will be offered with a standard cover by *Clayton Henry,* a pullbox variant cover by *Lee Garbett,* and a 1-for-20 incentive cover by *Tom Fowler.*

by Cliff Biggers

COMIC SHOP NEWSARAMA

Produced by *Comic Shop News* in cooperation with *newsarama.com*

Galactica Soars Again

It's been several years since the last ***Battlestar Galactica*** comic was released by Dynamite Entertainment. Some theorized that the franchise was dead, but that's far from the case; publisher *Nick Barrucci* was just waiting for the right creators to continue the series.

Enter *Dan Abnett & Andy Lanning,* two of the best-known writers of cosmic adventure in the comics biz.

This may, Abnett & Lanning helm Galactica's relaunch with ***Battlestar Galactica #1***. "This series is set in Classic ***Battlestar Galactica*** continuity," Abnett said, "and is a celebratory story as part of the 35th Anniversary of the original series going to air. The series will show how and why the ***Galactica*** is so important to the fate of mankind as we get to see a version of reality where the Battlestar did not exist and see what impact that had on the people of the Twelve Colonies."

Abnett & Lanning are playing with time travel and alternate realities in this story arc; were those established story elements in ***Battlestar Galactica,*** or is it something that they're bringing into the series for the first time? "Time travel stories were not part of the original series' short run, but they did crop up in the spinoff series, ***Galactica 1980,***" Lanning said. "We've taken a device from that series and used it in our 're-imagined' Dynamite ***BSG*** continuity, which ties this series in with our planned ***Galactica 1980*** followup.

"This story takes place after the end of the original series, but before the events that lead into ***Galactica 1980***. But we're basing our version in the existing Dynamite ***BSG*** continuity established in *Mark Guggenheim's* excellent ***Galactica 1980*** mini-series—but from the ***Classic BSG*** characters' point of view."

When Dynamite first announced the return of ***Battlestar Galactica,*** the launch storyline was different. What led to the decision to launch with the classic original ***Galactica*** cast instead? "As we mentioned, 2013 is the 35th anniversary of the original series, and Nick felt we'd be missing an opportunity to celebrate the source material," Abnett said. "He asked if we'd be interested in doing a Classic ***BSG*** tale as well as the planned ***Galactica 1980*** series we'd mapped out. We jumped at the chance, and think we've come up with a story that really celebrates the epic scale and grand space opera the original series created."

Some have said that if ***Star Wars*** was the Iliad, with a band of heroes cleverly finding a way to penetrate and destroy the impenetrable fortress and bring down Ilium/Death Star, then Galactica was the ***Odyssey,*** with a cast trying to find their way home against countless obstacles. Is there any merit to that epic comparison? "Totally," Lanning said. "***Battlestar Galactica,*** the original TV series, had a grand scale feel to it; from the story to the production values. It presented 'cinematic-TV' for the first time, and the interstellar world it created was very much grounded in an epic tale.

"Along with comparisons to the Odyssey, it also has Biblical themes running through it, with Adama as Moses, leading his displaced people back to their homeland. Throw in echoes of lost ancient civilizations; Atlantis and Lemuria, Egyptian aesthetics, and overtones of Chariots of the Gods, and the series resolutely presented its epic credentials from the very first episode!"

Will Starbuck and Apollo's space/time jaunt lay the groundwork for events that will resonate through future story lines? "The story is very much a self-contained tale," Abnett said, "but, as is always the case when writing on-going series, the opportunity to revisit things and explore ramifications at a later point is there to be explored later.

"The nature of the story is such that, if we do our job right, a new reader should be able to pick the book up and not have any trouble enjoying the it. For the fans of the original series, there's an extra level they can appreciate as well."

Battlestar Galactica #1, a $3.99 comic by *Dan Abnett, Andy Lanning & Cezar Razek,* is scheduled for May 15th release. The standard edition will feature cover art by *Alex Ross,* while *Chris Eliopoulos* will supply the art for the subscription variant cover. Dynamite is also offering a 1-for-25 *Alex Ross* black and white incentive cover (check with the folks at your friendly neighborhood comic shop for info regarding price and availability).

Meet the River-dead Gang in Afterlife With Archie

We've seen the Riverdale Gang cross paths with the Punisher, *Barack Obama, Sarah Palin,* Kiss, *George Takei,* the cast of Glee—heck, they've met lots of living celebrities.

But we never expected to see the Riverdale Gang crossing paths with the walking dead!

However, that's just what you'll find in ***Afterlife With Archie,*** a new ongoing series written by *Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa.*

"What if the zombie apocalypse began in Riverdale?" Archie publicity and marketing director *Steven Scott* asked rhetorically. "This horror-infused comic answers that question..."

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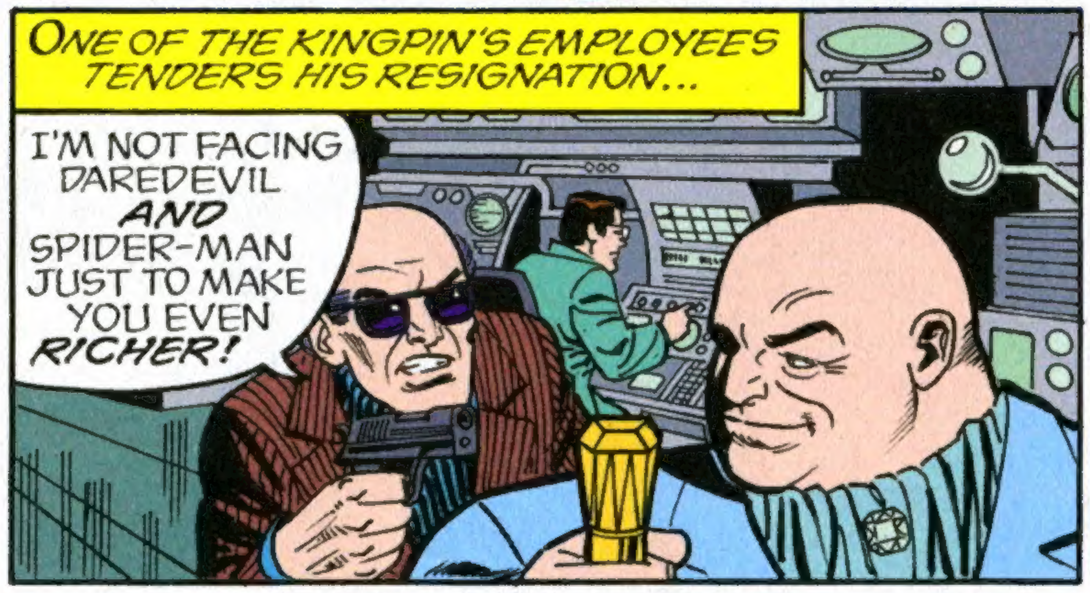
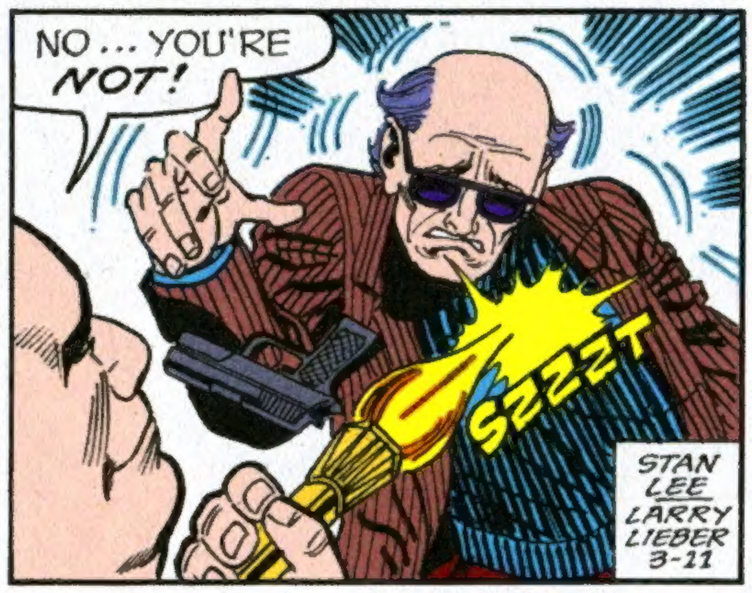
SPIDER-MAN

BY STAN LEE & LARRY LIEBER


ONE OF THE KINGPIN'S EMPLOYEES TENDERS HIS RESIGNATION...
I'M NOT FACING DAREDEVIL AND SPIDER-MAN JUST TO MAKE YOU EVEN RICHER!



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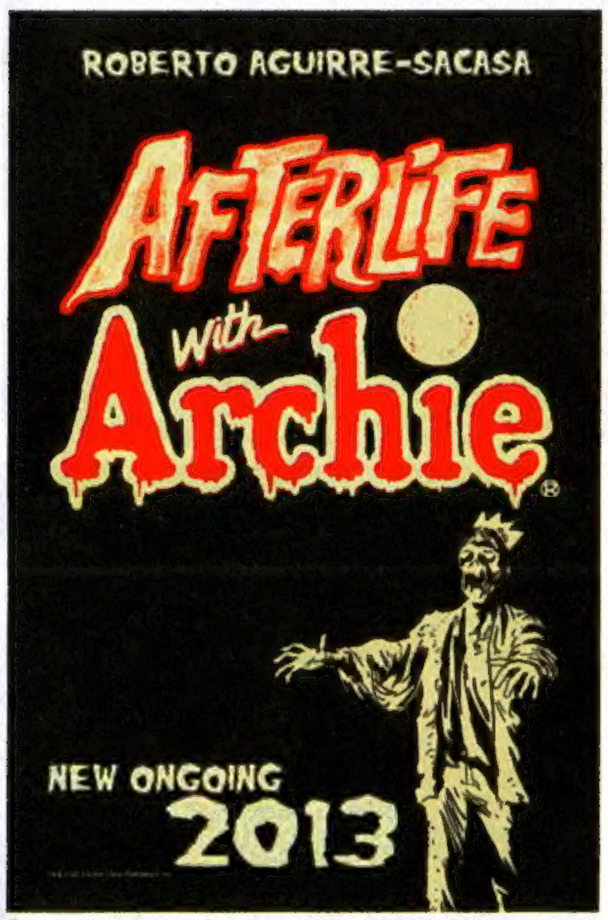
"Roberto's a superstar writer," Archie Co-CEO *Jon Goldwater* said of Aguirre-Sacasa (who, in addition to his comics writing has made a name for himself as a writer/producer on ***Glee,*** a writer of the Broadway musical ***Spider-Man: Turn off the Dark,*** and the writer of the upcoming cinematic remake of *Stephen King's* ***Carrie).*** "Working with him on the upcoming ***Afterlife With Archie*** is the next step in the ever expanding Archie universe."

"***Afterlife With Archie*** combines two of my great passions: Archie comics and horror comics," said Aguirre-Sacasa. "This series came out of conversations with Jon, asking questions like, 'What if the Archie characters found themselves in a *Stephen King* novel like ***The Stand*** or a *Sam Raimi* movie like ***The Evil Dead?***' Could we pull that off, tonally?

"We're really going for it. The first arc is called 'Escape from Riverdale.' The second arc is called—brace yourself—'Betty RIP.' Of course, all the horror stuff will be balanced by elements that are quintessentially Archie."



Look for ***Afterlife With Archie*** to launch in late 2013.

Connecting the Links Re: Snyder/Lee Superman Title

Scott Snyder & Jim Lee are launching a new ongoing ***Superman*** title. It's scheduled to debut the same month that the long-awaited ***Man of Steel*** reboots the Superman film franchise. So it's only natural that the title of the new series will be...

...Wait for it...

Superman Unchained!

DC surprised everyone with this unexpected title for the new series. Fans won't have to wait until June to get a look at ***Superman Unchained,*** however; the book will be previewed in DC's ***Superman*** Free Comic Book Day offering available on Saturday, May 4th, at participating comic shops.

Snyder admits that working on a figure as legendary as Superman can be quite challenging. ""If you think for a second, 'I'm working on Superman,' you get chills and it becomes very, very intimidating when you think of all the amazing stories that have come before," Snyder told ***USA Today.*** "The way to approach a character as iconic as him is you just come at it from a standpoint of what you love the most about the character, and then write a story that explores that, tear it down, and build it back up."

Snyder said that he will not only focus on the Man of Steel, but also on his supporting characters and how they influence him in his role as Superman. ""I know conceptually why he admires Lois Lane, but then when you're writing them and you feel the chemistry between them and it comes to life on the page, it's always these little bursts of surprises that have been a joy to discover with him," Snyder said.

The first issue will include a bonus two-sided tipped-in 11.75+" x 18.75+" poster that is described by DC as "a part of the reading experience and can be easily removed for display."

Each issue of ***Superman Unchained*** will also feature a backup story written by Snyder and illustrated by *Dustin Nguyen.*

CSNsider

•In the aftermath of Damian Wayne's death in ***Batman Incorporated #8,*** a title change is in the works for the book formerly known as ***Batman and Robin. B&R #19*** will appear with the new title ***Batman and Red Robin #19;*** look for it on April 10th. ***B&R #20*** will now carry the title ***Batman and Red Hood #20;*** it's slated for May 8th release. The title change will continue through the summer with the release of ***Batman and Batgirl #21*** (June), ***Batman and Catwoman #22*** (July), and ***Batman and Nightwing #23*** (August).

•The *Orson Scott Card-Aaron Johnston-Chris Sprouse* story originally scheduled for ***Adventures of Superman #1*** has been replaced; the new contents for the first issue include stories by *Jeff Parker & Chris Samnee* and by *Jeff Lemire, Justin Jordan, & Riley Rossmo.*

•In response to retailer and reader requests, DC has changed the ratio for the upcoming ***Mad*** variant editions of several New 52 titles. Originally announced as 1-for-25 variants, the covers will now be 1-for-10 variants to make them available to more readers and collectors. The new 1-for-10 variants will appear on ***Aquaman #19, Batwoman #19, Detective #19, Flash #19, Green Arrow #19, Green Lantern #19, Supergirl #19, Superman #19, Teen Titans #19,*** and ***Wonder Woman #19.*** In addition, DC is offering "match-to" ***Mad*** variants for ***Justice League of America #3, Justice League #19,*** and ***Batman #19.***

•DC has announced a new series and a change of title in preparation for the upcoming ***Trinity War*** event. ***Trinity of Sin: Pandora,*** written by *Ray Fawkes* and illustrated by *Daniel Sampere & Jonathan Glapion,* will follow the enigmatic hooded woman as she struggles to hunt down the horrors she inadvertently unleashed upon the world. At the same time, the ***Phantom Stranger*** series will be retitled ***Trinity of Sin: Phantom Stranger;***

writer *JM DeMatteis* and artist *Fernando Blanco* will refocus the series, beginning with the Phantom Stranger's trip to Hell to save his family... a trip that pits him against a foe he never expected to see again.

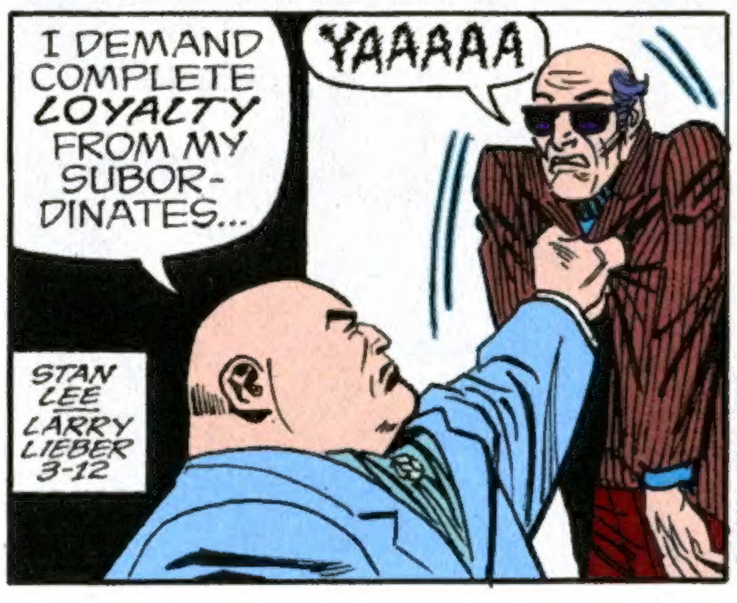
•Marvel Chief Creative Officer *Joe Quesada* joins writer *Brian Bendis* and fellow artists *Bryan Hitch & Carlos Pacheco* for ***Age of Ultron #10;*** Quesada will illustrate the final pages of the landmark series, which will reportedly feature a major continuity-altering conclusion. "There are gigantic ramifications for books coming out of it, including books that I'm writing," Bendis told newsarama.com. "

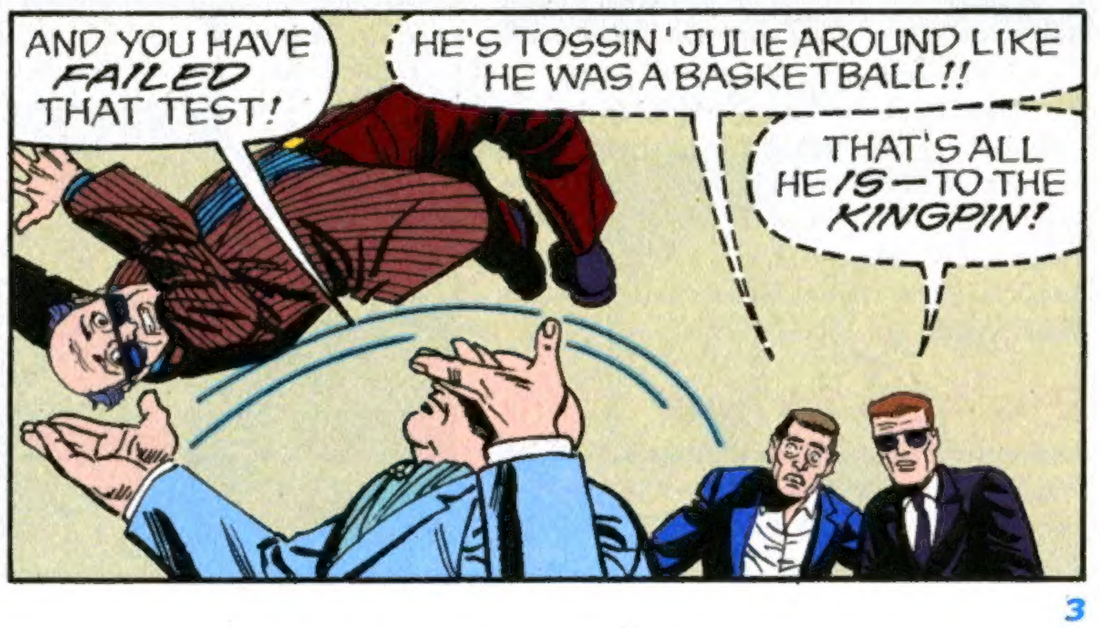
•Fantagraphics co-founder *Kim Thompson* has reduced his workload at the company while he focuses on combating lung cancer. Co-founder *Gary Groth,* along with *Eric Reynolds* and *Jason Miles,* are stepping up to handle his projects in his absence. "*Kim Thompson* has been my partner at Fantagraphics Books for 35 years," Groth said. "He's contributed vastly and selflessly to this company and to the comics medium and worked closely with countless fine artists over that time. This is a tough announcement to make, but everyone who knows Kim knows he's a fighter and we remain optimistic that he'll get through this and report back to work, where he belongs, doing what he loves." Everyone here at ***CSN*** hopes the early diagnosis and prompt treatment will lead to a full recovery and a return to Fantagraphics as soon as possible.

•Studio Proteus founder *Toren Smith,* a pioneer in popularizing manga in the United States, died in early March. Smith also co-created ***Dirty Pair*** with *Adam Warren.*

•*Phyllis Opolko,* Senior Marketing Manager for Diamond Comics Distributors and Alliance Game Distributors, passed away in early March after a lengthy illness. "Her fingerprints could be seen on our Open Houses, Retailer Summits, and events; on our website, or social media, and more clearly on our hearts," the companies said in announcing her passing.

•*Brian Azzarello & Eduardo Risso* revisit the world of ***100 Bullets*** for the eight-part ***100***





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Bullets: Brother Lono limited series that follows Lono, the Minuteman who was too tough to die.

•***X-Men #1,*** the *Brian Wood/Olivier Coipel* series originally slated for mid-April release, is late out of the gate: the first issue has now been pushed back a full six weeks to May 29th. No word on whether other issues will follow on a more-or-less monthly schedule; as soon as Marvel reveals more details, ***CSN*** will let you know!

•Marvel's *David Gabriel* listens to ***CSN*** readers and retailers: based on the requests from many readers looking for out-of-print (and thus very expensive) Marvel collections, the publisher is going to offer new printings of ***Uncanny X-Men Omnibus Volume 1, Amazing Spider-Man Omnibus Volume 1, Fantastic Four Omnibus Volume 1,*** and ***Daredevil by Frank Miller Omnibus Volume 1.*** And even better, reissues of other hard-to-find ***Omnibus*** volumes are likely to follow!

•After an absence of almost three years, ***Kurt Busiek's Astro City*** is returning in June, kicking off a run as "an ongoing monthly open-ended series," according to *Kurt Busiek*. While the book will appear under the DC imprint, it will *not* be a part of the DCU. *Brent Anderson* will continue as the series' artist.

Back to Press

•***Adventure Time: Fionna & Cake #2 2nd Printing*** (JAN138280), in stores 4/3.

•***Avengers #6 2nd Printing*** (JAN138308), featuring a variant cover by *Adam Kubert*, in stores 4/10.

•***Cable & X-Force #4 2nd Printing*** (JAN138309), featuring a variant cover by *Salvador Larroca*, in stores 4/10.

•***Deadpool #5 2nd Printing*** (JAN138310), featuring a variant cover by *Geof Darrow*, in stores 4/10.

•***Deadpool Killustrated #2 2nd Printing*** (JAN138314), featuring a variant cover by *Michael Del Mundo*, in stores 4/10.

•***Doctor Who: Prisoners of Time #3 2nd Printing*** (JAN138245), in stores 4/10.

•***Five Weapons #1 2nd Printing*** (JAN138340), in stores 4/3.

•***GI Joe 2nd Printing*** (JAN138246), in stores 4/10.

•***Hawkeye #2 5th Printing*** (JAN138315), featuring a variant cover by *David Aja*, in stores 4/10.

•***Helheim #1 2nd Printing*** (JAN138374), in stores 4/3.

•***Indestructible Hulk #4 2nd Printing*** (JAN138311), featuring a variant cover by *Leinil Yu*, in stores 4/10.

•***Injustice: Gods Among Us #2 2nd Printing*** (JAN138301), featuring a black and white version of the variant cover by *Jheremy Raapack*, in stores 4/3.

•***Nova #1 2nd Printing*** (JAN138312), featuring a variant cover by *Ed McGuinness*, in stores 4/10.

•***Savage Wolverine #2 2nd Printing*** (JAN138313), featuring a variant cover by *Frank Cho*, in stores 4/10.

•***Sex #1 2nd Printing*** (JAN138337), in stores 4/3.

•***Sixth Gun: Sons of the Gun #1 2nd Printing*** (JAN138289), in stores 4/3.

•***Superior Spider-Man #4 2nd Printing*** (JAN138235), featuring a variant cover by *Giuseppi Camuncoli*, in stores 4/3.

•***Worlds' Finest #10 2nd Printing*** (JAN138302), featuring a recolored logo and the added "Requiem" trade dress, in stores 4/3.

ADVENTURE TIME ORIGINAL GN VOL 1: PLAYING FIRE

Danielle Corsetto (W); Zack Sterling (A)

(Boom FEB130825 $11.99)

What's the Scoop?

Flame Princess leaves the Flame Kingdom and embarks on her very own adventure in this original graphic novel.

Why Should You Care?

Ever since the release of the first issue, ***Adventure Time*** has become a comic book phenomenon—an animation-inspired book that appeals to the youngest readers, their parents, and everyone in between. This graphic novel offers a heaping helping of the series that readers love—and who *doesn't* like extra-sized servings?

AGE OF ULTRON #4 (OF 10)

Brian Bendis (W); Bryan Hitch (A)

(Marvel FEB130474 $3.99)

AGE OF ULTRON #5 (OF 10)

Brian Bendis (W); Bryan Hitch (A)

(Marvel FEB130477 $3.99)

AGE OF ULTRON #6 (OF 10)

Brian Benis (W)

Brandon Peterson & Carlos Pacheco (A)

(Marvel FEB130480 $3.99)

What's the Scoop?

The Earth has been taken by Ultron—and what few super hero survivors remain are desperately trying to stay alive. The trail takes them to the Savage Land—and from there, they take the fight straight to Ultron, with a near-broken Captain America in the lead.

CSN TOP

Why Should You Care?

It may come across as a high-octane "Days of Avengers Near-Future Past," but there's no doubt that *Brian Bendis'* farewell to the Avengers franchise is one of the most of the most action-packed high-concept Marvel event storylines since ***Civil War***. And what a way to say goodbye—with a story that shakes up Avengers continuity and dishes up major surprises by the time it's all over!

AMALA'S BLADE #1 (OF 4)

Steve Horton (W); Michael Dialynis (A)

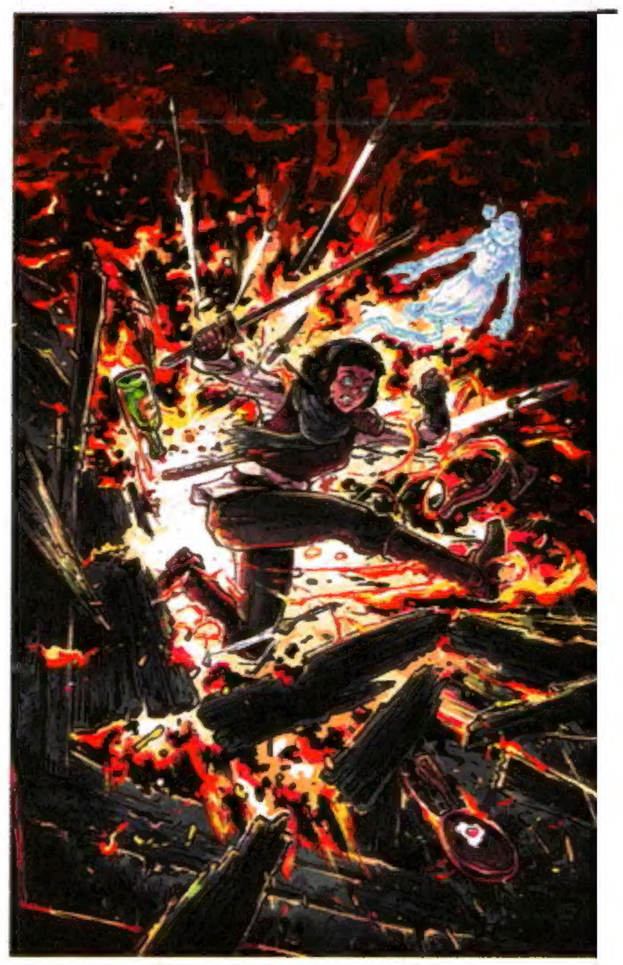
(Dark Horse FEB130028 $3.50)

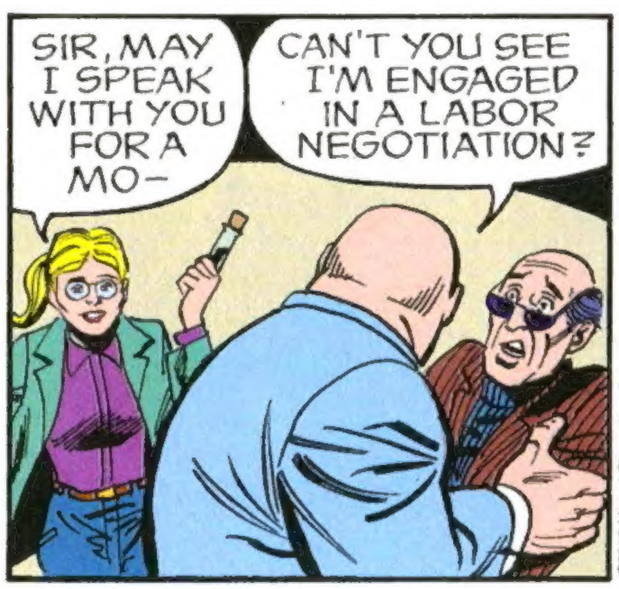
What's the Scoop?

The kingdom of Naamaron may be divided into two warring factions, but both sides have one thing in common: they fear the deadly assassin Amala. Now that she's drawing too much attention to herself, the great vizier decides it might be time to dispatch her on a suicide mission...

Why Should You Care?

An energetic character-driven fantasy with manga overtones, ***Amala's Blade*** is a book that can't be pigeonholed.





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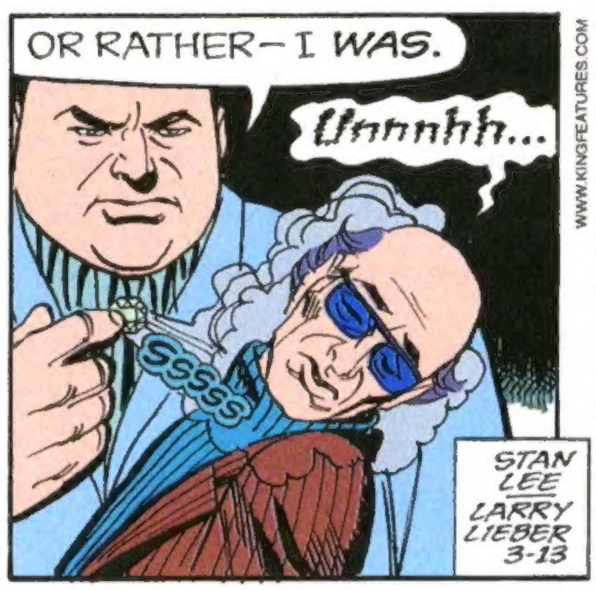

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COMICS: APRIL

BATMAN AND RED ROBIN #19

Peter Tomasi (W); Patrick Gleason & Mick Gray (A)

(DC FEB130150 $2.99)

What's the Scoop?

Disconsolate following the death of Damian Wayne, Batman is joined by former partner Red Robin as he tries to find direction in a seemingly senseless world.

Why Should You Care?

No one saw the death of Damian coming—but DC assures readers that there are still more surprises in store in the aftermath of Robin's demise, and it appears the book formerly known as ***Batman and Robin*** is going to be at the center of it all.

BATMAN INCORPORATED #10

Grant Morrison (W); Chris Burnham (A)

(DC FEB130146 $2.99)

What's the Scoop?

When only one can survive, who will it be: the man or the bat?

Why Should You Care?

Grant Morrison, the mastermind of the Batman revitalization that began long before the New 52, is nearing the end of the run on ***Batman Incorporated***—and if you're at all familiar with Morrison's work, you know that you're going to want to see what he delivers in his final issues.

BATMAN: LI'L GOTHAM #1

Dustin Nguyen & Derek Fridolfs (W/A)

(DC FEB130232 $2.99)

What's the Scoop?

Think of it as the "holidays special" as this issue presents charming Halloween and Thanksgiving-themed stories suitable for all ages.

Why Should You Care?

If you've tried to find a Bat-book for the youngest members of your family, you know how few good choices there are. Here's one that's sure to appeal to readers old and young alike: lighthearted Batman tales that put the "fun" back in "funnybook."

DARK SHADOWS: YEAR ONE #1

Marc Andreyko (W); Guiu Vilanova (A)

(Dynamite FEB130950 $3.99)

What's the Scoop?

How did Barnabas Collins become a bloodthirsty vampire? And what other family tragedies did the Collins lineage suffer over the generations? The answers are about to be revealed...

Why Should You Care?

Marc Andreyko fills in some fascinating gaps in ***Dark Shadows*** history with this look at Barnabas Collins' earliest days as one of the undead.

DETECTIVE COMICS #19

John Layman (W); Jason Fabok & Andy Clarke (A)

(DC FEB130159 $7.99)

What's the Scoop?

DC celebrates the 900th issue of ***Detective Comics*** with the extra-length "Mystery of the 900."

Why Should You Care?

Nine. Hundred. Issues. That's an incredible run—almost a timeline of comics history. And no matter what the current numbering system is, a celebration is *definitely* in order!

GI JOE: COBRA FILES #1

Mike Costa (W); Antonio Fuso (A)

(IDW FEB130284 $3.99)

What's the Scoop?

Chameleon used to be a Cobra agent. Now she's made a place for herself on the GI Joe team the old-fashioned way—she *earned* it. But does she really have what it takes? She and her teammates are about to find out...

Why Should You Care?

IDW's relaunch of ***GI Joe*** continues with a revamp of ***Cobra Files***, which joins the relaunched ***GI Joe*** and ***GI Joe Special Missions*** as stepping stones into an updated, streamlined, high-intensity world of espionage, conflict, and heroism. If you've ever enjoyed ***GI Joe*** in the past, then this might be the perfect time to rejoin the team!

HARBINGER WARS (VU) #1 (OF 4)

Joshua Dysart & Duane Swierczynski (W) Clayton Henry & Clayton Crain (A)

(Valiant FEB131152 $3.99)

BLOODSHOT (VU) #10

Duane Swierczynski (W); Barry Kitson (A)

(Valiant FEB131159 $3.99)

HARBINGER (VU) #11

Joshua Dysart (W); Khari Evans (A)

(Valiant FEB131156 $3.99)

What's the Scoop?

Two dozen undisciplined, untested, and untrained superhuman children have just escaped from a top-secret research facility and into the world.

When Bloodshot, Toyo Harada, and Peter Stanchek join the chase, will the Valiant Universe be ready for its first all-out superhuman showdown? How will Bloodshot deal with the escapees? And how will they react to the revelation of Project Rising Spirit's secret mission?

Why Should You Care?

Two all-star writers unite for the first crossover event storyline in the new Valiant Universe—and each writer then continues the saga in his own respective title. Four the next four months, this is going to be *the* crossover storyline to follow—and before it's over, it's going to lead to the first New Valiant appearance of the H.A.R.D. Corps, one of the most requested still-missing original Valiant concepts!

INDESTRUCTIBLE HULK #6 NOW

Mark Waid (W); Walt Simonson (A)

(Marvel FEB130526 $3.99)

What's the Scoop?

Banner takes his lab team to... Jotunheim? Get ready for Hulk versus the Frost Giants. Oh, yeah—there's also some god wielding a hammer...

Why Should You Care?

Thor. *Walt Simonson*. No more explanation is needed. (Although *Mark Waid's* razor-sharp storytelling is a pretty doggone good second reason!)

JUPITER'S LEGACY #1

Mark Millar (W); Frank Quitely (A)

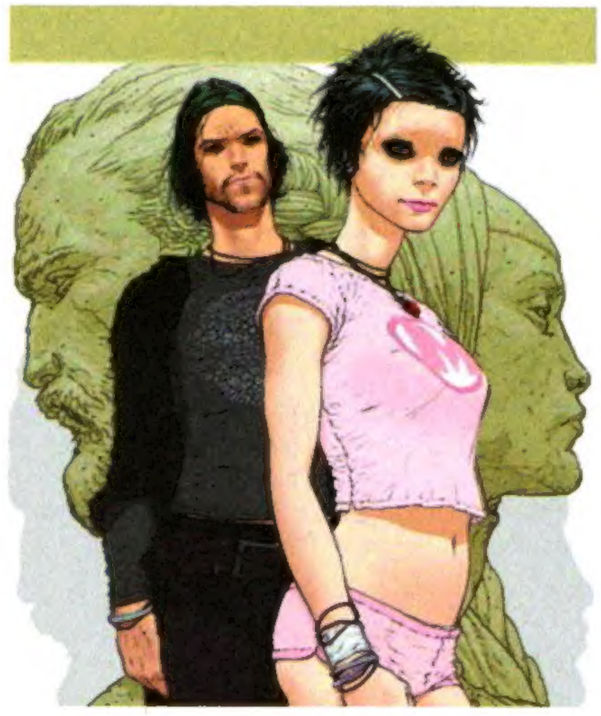
(Image FEB130379 $2.99)

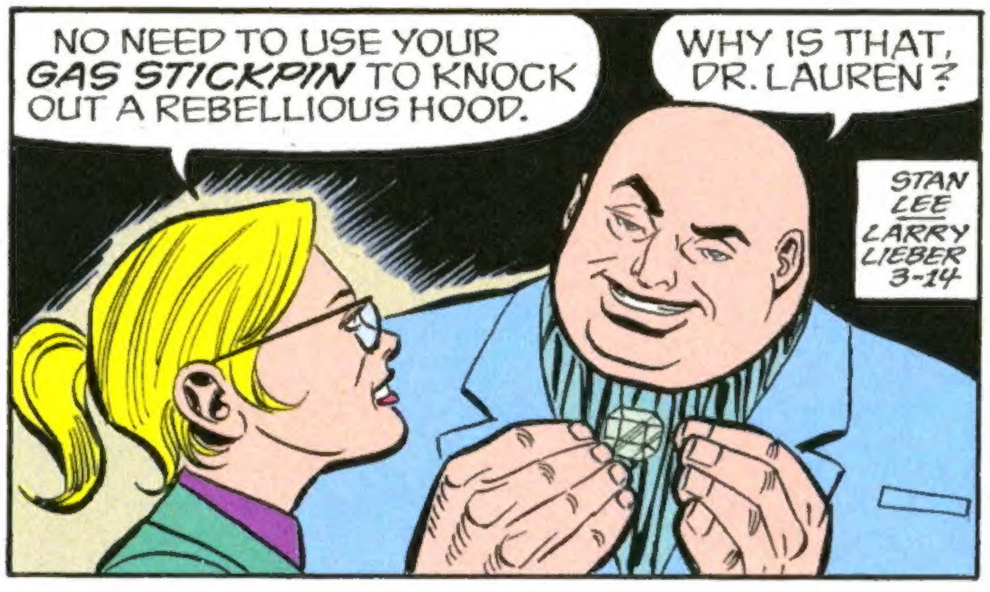
What's the Scoop?

Think of this as the comic for every child who's had trouble living up to their parents' standards—but in this case, the parents are the world's greatest heroes, and the children are the next generation of super-beings, resentful of the expectations thrust upon them.

Why Should You Care?

Any project that unites superstars like *Mark Millar* and *Frank Quitely* definitely qualifies as "unmissable!"





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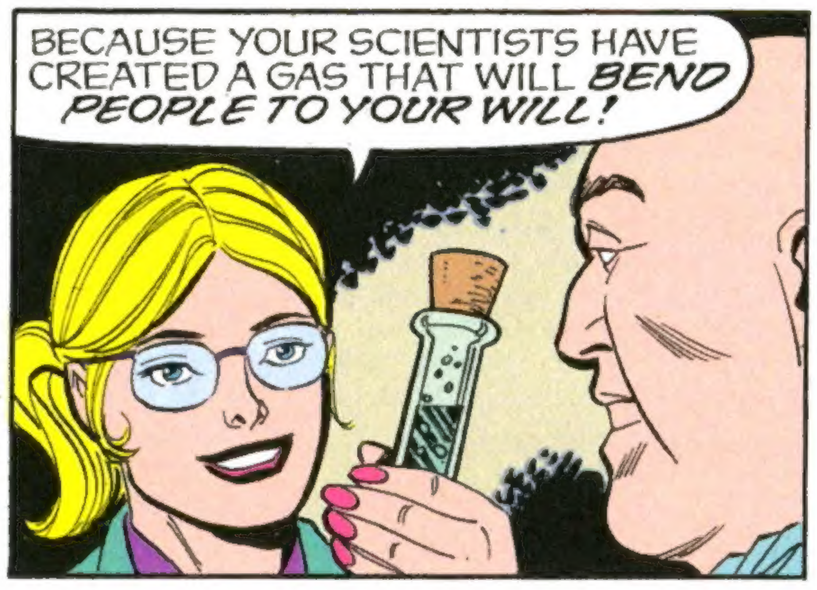


JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA #3

Geoff Johns (W); David Finch (A)

(DC FEB130111 $3.99)

What's the Scoop?

A new Secret Society is forming... but which of its members has the power to attack the Justice League of America from within?

Why Should You Care?

The heroes have their superteams—and now it's time for the villains to form a team of their own! And with master storyteller *Geoff Johns* chronicling their creation, this is going to be one formidable force of evil indeed!

MISS FURY #1

Rob Williams (W); Jackson Herbert (A)

(Dynamite FEB130895 $3.99)

What's the Scoop?

What seems like a routine confrontation with Nazis goes horribly wrong when Miss Fury finds herself thrust into the year 2013... but this is a 2013 in which the war never ended!

Why Should You Care?

From the pages of *Masks* comes an all-new *Miss Fury* series—and rather than making you choose between classic pulp-era heroine or contemporary heroine, Dynamite gives you both in one time-spanning story!

REGULAR SHOW #1

KC Green (W); Allison Strejlau (A)

(Boom FEB130826 $3.99)

What's the Scoop?

Mordecai the Bluejay and Rigby the Raccoon make the leap from the teevee screen to the comic shop rack in the first issue of an all-new ongoing series based on the Cartoon Network fave.

Why Should You Care?

Boom is the company that pretty much started the current all-ages "boom" with *Adventure Time,* and now they're continuing it with another series sure to appeal to young comic book newcomers and veteran readers alike.

SESAME STREET #1

Jason M. Burns (W); Amy Mebberson (A)

(Ape FEB130702 $3.99)

What's the Scoop?

Elmo, Big Bird, Grover, Cookie Monster... they're all here! In the first issue, Elmo decides he wants to be a superhero, but there's one problem: he has no superpowers! However, Grover has a solution...

Why Should You Care?

Looking for an entry-level book for the youngest potential comics fans? You can't get any more "entry-level" than *Sesame Street!* Even better, it's equally appealing for boys and girls!

STAR WARS: DARTH VADER & NINTH ASSASSIN #1 (OF 5)

Tim Siedell (W); Stephen Thompson, Mark Irwin (A)

(Dark Horse FEB130041 $3.50)

What's the Scoop?

Eight assassins dispatched to do in Darth Vader, eight assassins executed. So who in the galaxy would be willing to become the ninth assassin... or the ninth victim?

Why Should You Care?

The mega-success of *Brian Wood *& Carlos D'Anda's* ***Star Wars*** proves that fans are looking for new stories of the *real* ***Star Wars*** characters—so that's just what Dark Horse is delivering with this new Darth Vader miniseries!

THANOS RISING #1 (OF 5) NOW

Jason Aaron (W); Simone Bianchi (A)

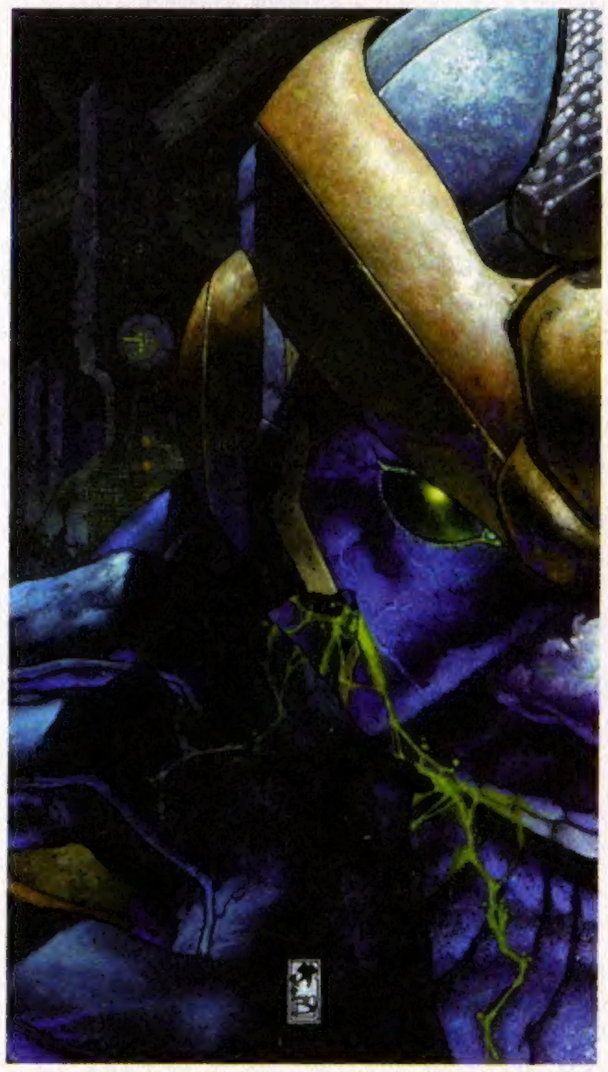
(Marvel FEB130488 $3.99)

What's the Scoop?

Every Marvel reader knows that Thanos is the ultimate villain... but where did he come from, how did he become such a malevolent force, and what does he want?

Why Should You Care?

Jason Aaron & Simone Bianchi explore the origins and motivations of Marvel's ultimate force of evil. Whether you first met him at the end of *The Avengers* film or you've been a fan since the *Jim Starlin* days, you're going to be fascinated by this look at Thanos' earliest experiences.



UBER #0

Kieron Gillen (W); Canaan White (A)

(Avatar FEB130769 $3.99)

What's the Scoop?

Germany is in ruins, and the end of the war seems only days away. But the Nazis have their own secret weapon: super beings with the power to change the direction of the war!

Why Should You Care?

Kieron Gillen makes his Avatar debut with this compelling look at a disturbing alternate history. Think the atom bomb was the ultimate weapon? It's *nothing* compared to weaponized superbeings!

Check 'Em Out: Comics You *Should* Be Reading!

ABE SAPIEN: DARK & TERRIBLE #1 (OF 3)

(Dark Horse FEB130010 $3.50)

Now that *Mike Mignola's* ***Hellboy in Hell*** has reminded everyone just how entertainingly twisted the Hellboy Universe is, here's a new Abe Sapien solo series that'll take you on a guided tour through a devastated America, complete with monster corpses and other weirdness.

GETTYSBURG GN

(Zenith JAN131353 $19.99)

Gettysburg was much more than the site of a speech by President Lincoln; it was turning point of the Civil War, the location of a brutal battle that marked the beginning of the end of the Confederacy, and the site of a lasting tribute to those who gave their lives to preserve the union. Now war historian and veteran comics creator *Wayne Vansant* tells the story of the battle and its significance in this powerful graphic novel.

NEOZOIC: TRADER'S GAMBIT #1 (OF 4)

(Red 5 FEB131120 $3.50)

The Flintstones were right—dinosaurs and humans *did* live side-by-side! Okay, maybe not—but in this series by *Paul Ens,* they co-exist, albeit not on the best of terms.

POLARITY #1 (OF 4)

(Boom FEB130853 $3.99)

A bipolar artist, dissatisfied with all that life has to offer him, discovers that his mental instability is more than just a disorder, and that his bipolar medication hasn't just been subduing depression and uncontrollable mania...it's been suppressing his super powers! As a bonus, each issue comes with a free download for a new original song written and performed by creator *Max Bemis* of the band Say Anything.

RELISH: MY LIFE IN KITCHEN GN

(First Second FEB131017 $17.99)

Lucy Knisley, daughter of a chef and a gourmet, traces key episodes in her life thus far, framed by what she was eating at the time and lessons learned about food, cooking, and life. And she's willing to share her fascination with food with her readers: each chapter is bookended with an illustrated recipe, both treasured family dishes and Lucy's original inventions.

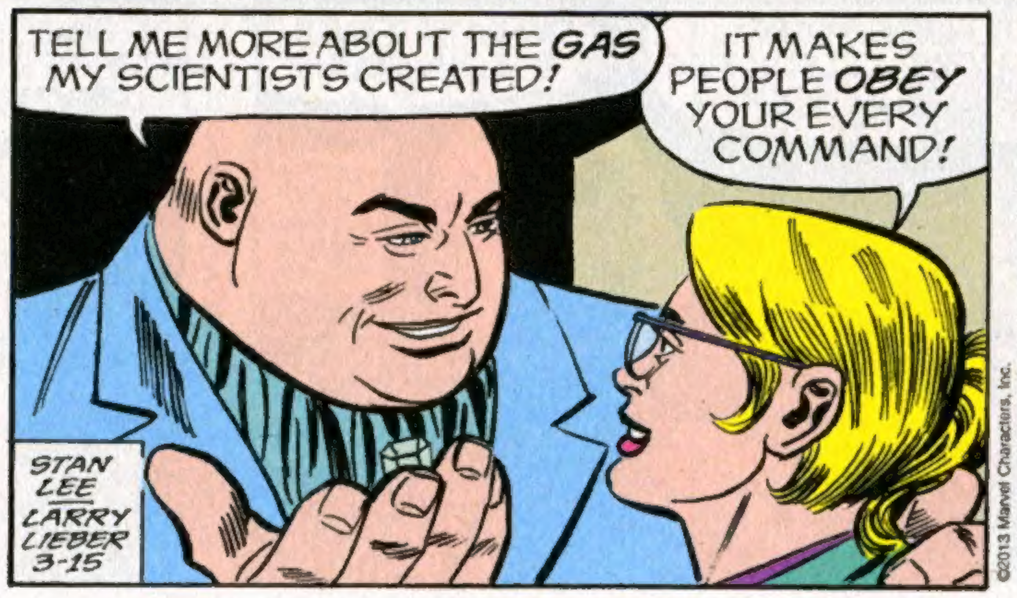
MEGA MAN #24

(Archie JAN130857 $2.99)

SONIC UNIVERSE #51

(Archie FEB130739 $2.99)

Ian Flynn masterminds the meeting of two of the most popular heroes in videogame history as Archie launches "When Worlds Collide," a twelve-part Sonic-Mega Man crossover.



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FYI: A Must-Have Addition to Your Reference Library

ALTER EGO #116

(TwoMorrows JAN131395 $8.95)

Alter Ego pays tribute to comics legend Joe Kubert with this special issue featuring a quartet of interviews with Kubert on his historic career as artist (and often writer) of Hawkman, Tor, Enemy Ace, Sgt. Rock, Viking Prince, Tarzan, and more.

COMIC BOOK CREATOR #1

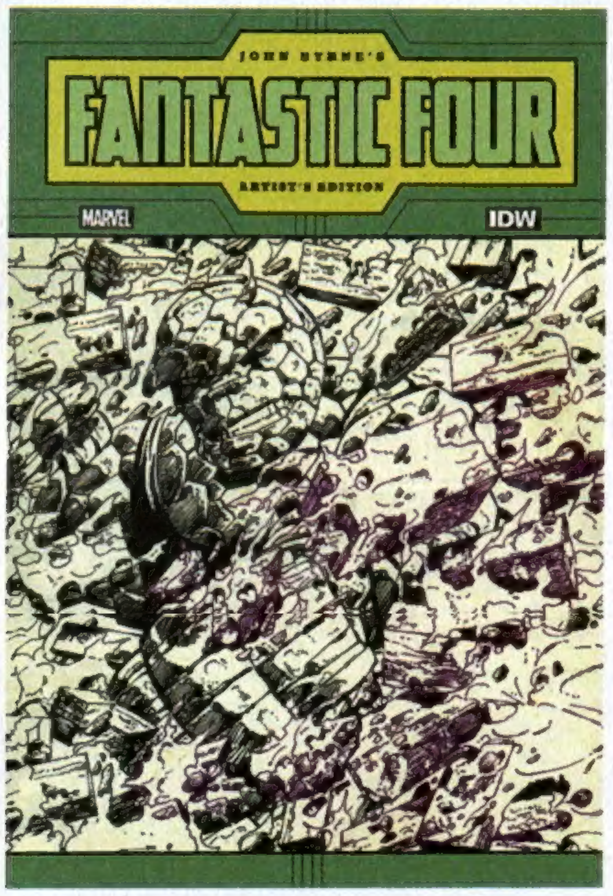
(TwoMorrows JAN131397 $8.95)

The premiere issue of this new look at the men and women responsible for the comics we love focuses on Jack Kirby and his lifelong struggle for equitable recognition and remuneration for his priceless contributions to the art form.

DAVE SIM CONVERSATIONS HC

(University Press JAN131405 $40.00)

A fascinating and insightful collection of interviews with ***Cerebus*** creator *Dave Sim*, many of which have been out of print for years.



JOHN BYRNE'S FANTASTIC FOUR ARTIST EDITION HC

(IDW JAN130368 $150.00)

This deluxe, lavish hardcover presents *John Byrne's* art in full size, meticulously reproduced in full color to capture every detail and nuance of the original artboards.

Collected Cool: April's Best Reprint Editions

BILL EVERETT ARCHIVES HC VOL 2: HEROIC TALES

(Fantagraphics FEB131027 $39.99)

Editor *Blake Bell* assembles more than 200 pages of never-before-reprinted heroic adventures by Golden-Age-Of-Comics legend *Bill Everett*.

FLASH CHRONICLES TP VOL 4

(DC JAN130310 $14.99)

This affordable chronological collection reprints ***Flash #s 119-124***—including #123's "Flash of Two Worlds," the *John Broome-Carmine Infantino* tale that first introduced the Earth 2 concept to the DC Universe.

HOUSE OF SECRETS OMNIBUS HC

(Vertigo/DC OCT120297 $75.00)

Five otherworldly spirits known as the Juris summon people to judge them for their secrets in this moody and compelling series by *Steven T. Seagle & Teddy H Kristiansen*. This volume reprints ***House of Secrets #s 1-25*** and more.

MARSHAL LAW: THE DELUXE EDITION HC

(DC DEC120334 $49.99)

Become a master of the Marshall arts with this hefty omnibus collection of every Marshal Law tale by *Pat Mills & Kevin O'Neill*.

MIND MGMT HC VOL 1

(Dark Horse DEC120059 $19.99)

Immerse yourself in *Matt Kindt's* complex, conspiratorial tale of weaponized psychics, a runaway agent, and a reporter determined to uncover the truth; this collection includes ***Mind MGMT #s 1-6***.

STEVE DITKO'S MONSTERS HC VOL 2: KONGA

(IDW FEB130373 $34.99)

March saw the release of the *Joe Gill-Steve Ditko* big lizard series ***Gorgo*** in a comprehensive hardcover collection; now it's time for the big ape series ***Konga***, featuring more great Ditko art produced for Charlton Comics in the early 1960s. There was a *lot* more to Ditko's career than Spidey and Doctor Strange!

X-MEN: LONGSHOT TP

(Marvel FEB130649 $19.99)

Back in print at last, this book collects the *Ann Nocenti* miniseries that introduced the luckiest man alive—and it's also the series that made a superstar out of then-newcomer artist *Arthur Adams!*

Hot Commodities: April's Hottest Merchandising & Collectibles

DC BATMAN AUTOMOBILIA FIGURE COLLECTORS MAGAZINE #5: DETECTIVE #400

(Eaglemoss JAN131391 $20.00)

DC BATMAN AUTOMOBILIA FIGURE COLLECTORS MAGAZINE #6: DETECTIVE #156

(Eaglemoss JAN131392 $20.00)

Eaglemoss, best known for their superb itty-bitty-statue-quality lead miniature figures of Marvel and DC heroes and villains, continues their vehicular tour of Bat-history with two more Batmobiles—one a vintage finned behemoth from 1950, the other a sleek roadster from 1970.

DC SUPERHERO CHESS FIGURE COLLECTORS MAGAZINE #32: QUESTION & SUPERMAN 2 PACK

(Eaglemoss FEB131239 $16.00)

The DC Superhero Chess Magazine Collection wraps up its Batman set with The Question, a White Pawn, as its final piece—and, as an bonus, they kick off their new Justice League set with the inclusion of Superman, the White King of the Justice League.

IRON PATRIOT STATUE

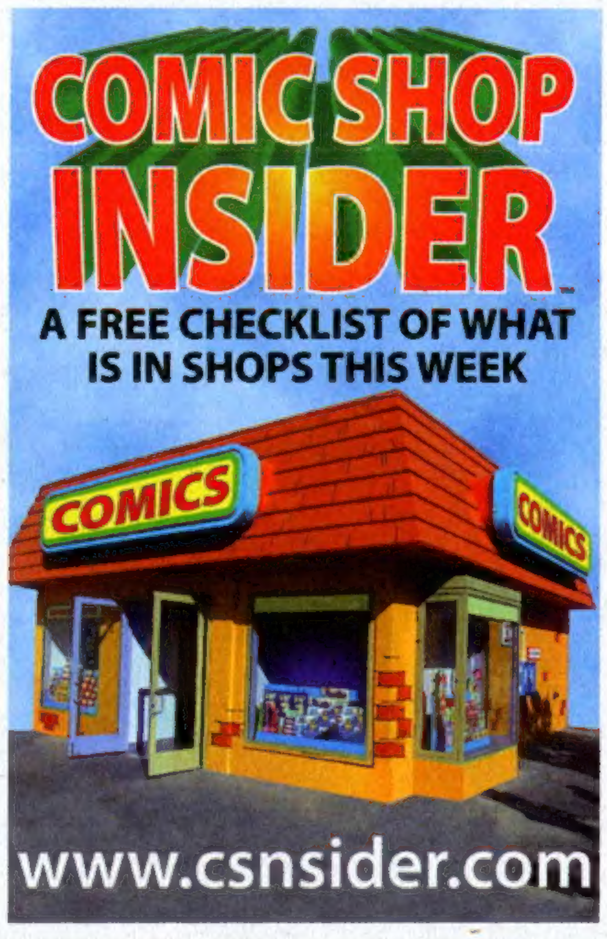
(Bowen FEB131658 $230.00)

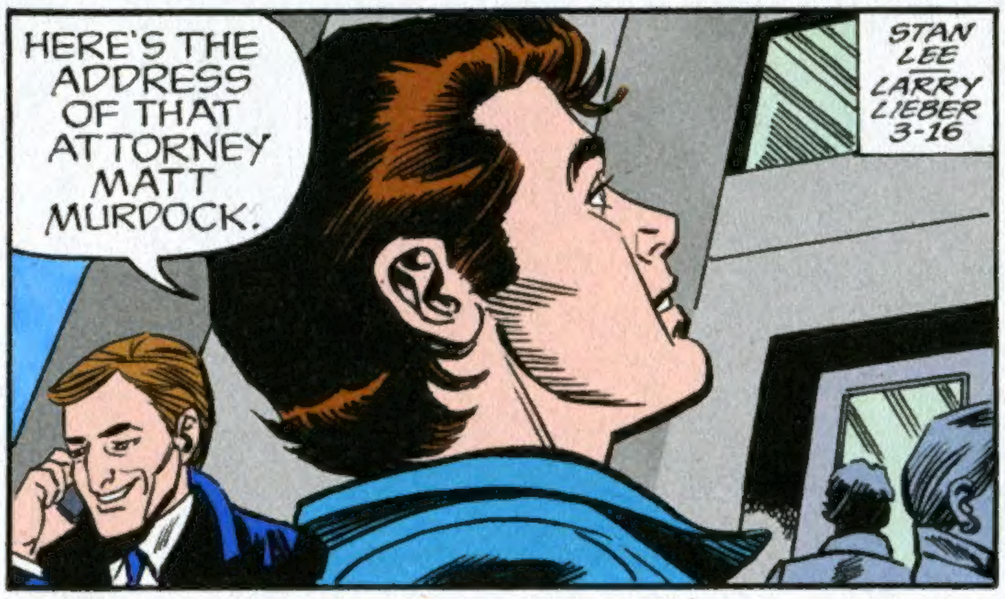
The armor may look like a cross between Iron Man and Captain America, but the man wearing it was none other than machiavellian villain Norman Osborn! The 13.5" tall Iron Patriot statue depicts the red-silver-and-blue armor in all its glory in a sculpt by the Kucharek Brothers.

TOMB OF DRACULA STATUE

(Bowen FEB131659 $275.00)

Randy Bowen himself does the honors on this 16" statue that captures the vampiric horror of *Marv Wolfman & Gene Colan's* take on the greatest of all vampires.





NOW I'LL FIND OUT WHAT HE HAS TO DO WITH THE SUPERHERO DAREDEVIL!
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